

disloyalty and defiance. The accession of his sister Isabella as Queen of Castile in 1474—five years, that is, after her marriage to young Ferdinand of Aragon—and that of her husband as King of Aragon in 1479, P^{ut} a period to the *regime* of such puppet rulers in Spain. " From the day of the departure of the good Regent Ferdinand in 1412 to that of the Treaty of Lisbon in 1479," says Mr Burke, "the government (of Castile) may be characterised as anarchy, tempered by favouritism . . . the nobles of every degree and condition, with rare and remarkable exceptions, agreed only in oppressing the people and defying the authority of the crown." To energise the crown, it was necessary first of all to curb this turbulent Castilian nobility, and this policy Isabella and Ferdinand pursued with extraordinary success. " We shall take care," they bluntly replied to the remonstrances of some of these factious grandees, " not to imitate the example of Henry the Fourth, in becoming a tool in the hands of our nobility." They showed both the force and the prudence of the strong ruler, and the methods they adopted, though to some extent selfish and unconstitutional, had the merit of securing firm government and prosperity. To depress the nobles, they cultivated the commons, and when they had attained their ends by the aid of the Cortes they were strong enough to dispense with the direct co-operation of the middle class, and practically play the *role* of the autocrat. " The Third Estate," to quote Mr Burke again, " was treated with marked respect by the prudent Isabella, and the assembly of Toledo in 1480 is one of the most celebrated in the history of Castile. But this popular authority was not destined to be of long duration. The Catholic kings were essentially autocratic, and as soon as they had sufficiently humbled the power of the nobility the influence of the commons was suffered to become rapidly smaller, until at length, towards the end of the reign, the power and the independence of the Estates of the realm were greatly impaired. While the influence of the Cortes decayed, moreover, the worst and not the best qualities of the people themselves were developed by the autocratic bigotry of Isabella and the cruel avarice of Ferdinand; and the Castilians, as they gradually lost their freedom, became false, and covetous, and intolerant. It is a dark